
COVID-19 Update: Shift to Remote Learning

Fri, Mar 13, 2020 at 11:06 AM



BENNINGTON COLLEGE

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Bennington Community:

In light of rapidly changing circumstances driven by the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), we have made the very difficult decision to transition all coursework to remote instruction for the remainder of the term, beginning Monday, March 30. This measure was guided by our unwavering commitment to the health and safety of this community, and the growing need to take extraordinary preventative measures to assist in this unprecedented public health crisis—and weighed heavily against the major disruption we know this change will bring.

I recognize that this will come as very upsetting news—most especially to our seniors—and my heart goes out to all of you. The core of Bennington's academic enterprise is formed by the connection between students and faculty, the magic of our classrooms, studios, and laboratories, the care of our dedicated staff, and the inspiring beauty of our campus. But we are more than what our physical location holds and nurtures, and we know that our connection as a community will remain strong despite necessary distance.

Needless to say, this is not how any of us expected the term to unfold, but we must act in the very best interest of our community locally and globally. Given the risks inherent to our residential campus, the realities of a dedicated but limited local healthcare infrastructure, and the distinct possibility that it will become harder for students to return home in the coming weeks, we must act now.

All students who can should return home as soon as possible, and depart no later than Saturday, March 21 at 4:00 pm. Students who are unable to leave campus—for a variety of possible reasons—can [petition to stay](#) until the end of the term.

All Spring 2020 courses in progress will continue remotely through alternative modes of instruction, and students will have the opportunity to complete the term and earn all credits underway so that they can stay on track for their anticipated graduation dates, including current seniors.

Below is more detailed, immediately relevant information. Our [FAQ](#) has been updated, and will continue to be updated, with answers to additional questions to further address how students, faculty, and staff will be affected by this change.

Timeline for the Spring 2020 Term

- **Friday, March 13, 6:00 pm:** End of in-person classes and advising.
- **Sunday, March 15, 2:00 pm:** Deadline for students for whom leaving campus will be a significant hardship or an impossibility to complete [this form](#) to identify the need for an extension to leave, or to request housing for the remainder of the spring term.

- **Monday, March 16 and Tuesday, March 17:** Focused advising days. Advising, a central and distinctive part of a Bennington education, will take place remotely after in-person teaching ends on Friday, March 13. Advisors will contact advisees to plan for the shift to on-line instruction and to make plans for how they will work together remotely for advising for the rest of term (mode of contact, frequency of meetings), as well as to review classes in progress and objectives for the remainder of the term.
- **Wednesday, March 18-Sunday, March 22:** Long Weekend. Note that this is shifted from the scheduled dates of Long Weekend as posted on the Academic Calendar.
- **Saturday, March 21, 4:00 pm:** Deadline for students not approved to remain on campus to depart College housing. Information will be sent to all students and families from the Office of Student Life with detailed information regarding the move-out process, which will follow the process we use at the end of term time, including support for on-campus storage and transportation to Albany airport and Albany-Rensselaer train station at no cost.
- **Monday, March 23-Friday, March 27:** Preparation Week. Faculty will use this time to continue to revisit course learning objectives and course materials, adjust syllabi, and test the tools they will use in the remote delivery of their courses, as well as to check in with advisees. Students will prepare to shift to remote learning by familiarizing themselves with the tools needed for remote instruction, testing the equipment they will use, catching up on work, following any steps provided by their course instructors, and reviewing the [FAQ](#) that we are updating often to address the many questions we know you will have. Students with Plans due this term will also use this time to continue working on their Plan essays, which are due Thursday, March 26.
- **Monday, March 30:** Spring term resumes with remote instruction. The Curriculum Planning Committee has prepared important guidance for faculty and the Provost and Dean's Office and IT will provide support and resources throughout the remainder of the term.
- **Friday, April 10:** End of First half of term (end of first seven-week courses).
- **Monday, April 13:** Beginning of second half of term (start of second seven-week courses).
- **Thursday, May 28, Noon:** Spring Term Ends (no change from published academic calendar)

Students and families, I know you are worried about the ways in which this shift will alter work in progress. The seriousness with which Bennington students take their work is among the things I most love and admire about Bennington. Please know that our devoted faculty and staff are doing everything they can to facilitate a smooth transition and to create new and meaningful ways of learning together. We ask that you be generous and flexible as we enter into this space together.

Faculty and staff, I know how deeply you care about our students, our academic mission, and our shared enterprise. I also know that this crisis affects you personally, whether you live locally or farther away from campus. Please know that I, and all involved, are personally committed to managing this difficult transition as best we can, together, and to supporting you in this uncharted new terrain.

I am deeply grateful for the collective care and support demonstrated daily by Bennington staff, faculty, and students. Let us all continue to take care of each other during this exceptionally trying time—and long after.



Isabel Roche
